

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
#365**

**KENNETH M. TAYLOR**

**P-40 PILOT**

**“FIRESIDE CHAT” PROGRAM  
WITH DANIEL MARTINEZ**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

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**USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL  
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(Conversation off-mike)

Daniel Martinez (DM): Again, welcome to our fireside chat program. Today we're really honored to have one of the key participants in the Pearl Harbor attack and our fireside chat program is based on the following, it's a chat, it's a conversation. Brigadier General Taylor—he hates me putting all that heavy title on, he likes to be called Ken. He likes informal discussions. He dreaded, during the fiftieth anniversary, that he had to prepare some paper and get this story that is told over and over again in a kind of, this long, lengthy manner. Well, today, everybody gets to talk to you, which is a little bit unusual, 'cause everybody wants these prepared remarks and we don't want that. What the idea of the program is, is for individuals to be able to talk about, in a question and answer period, what it was like during the time period, a time period which was so pivotal in our history. Ken Taylor is one of the few aviators that got up during the attack, he engaged the enemy over what we now

know as Barbers Point area and accounted for himself rather well, along with his compatriot, George Welch. And his story is compelling, it's been told in every book and I suspect that he never thought on that quiet Sunday morning that he'd be catapulted into history the way he was. He has had a long, distinguished career with the Air Force and the defense of our country and retired as a brigadier general and has also served in the Alaska Air National Guard as well, as one of their chief officers, and he's a heck of a golfer, as I found out. Hits the ball straight and true!

One of the things that I have found in my career of researching Pearl Harbor and something you will find, there is really a distinction between what individuals do in their military careers. That is, I've met fighter pilots from the United States and I've met fighter pilots from Japan and one historian said if you ever want to distinguish an aviator in what he or she does, look into their eyes. And the first time I met Ken Taylor, I was looking into his eyes and I knew that I

was talking to a fighter pilot. They're very, very skilled.

They have a very, very dangerous job and nothing was more dangerous than taking off in tuxedo pants, going up to meet an enemy that had come unannounced.

It's my privilege to introduce Ken Taylor and our fireside chat begins with his conversation, maybe have some opening remarks. I know you hate these formal things, but Ken got lost on his way to Pearl Harbor today, by the way.

(Laughter)

DM: He's used to an aerial view, not the road view. So we do have a Pearl Harbor survivor here today as well, Ken, and that's Bob Kinsler. And he was right next to you. He got woken up by the Japanese himself. He was at Schofield Barracks. So Bob Kinsler is certainly one of our key people here. And of course we have some people have come to recreate that time period for us.

Kenneth Taylor (KT): I see that!

DM: So with that, let's start the conversation and we'll start with you. What's...

KT: Yes, let me say a word or two. A few years back when I first met Dan, he called me up and asked if I would do a recording for the *Arizona* Memorial. I says, "I think you've got the wrong guy. I'm not in the navy. I was in the army air corps."

He explained to me that, "I know, we're changing things here at the park service, that's now in charge of this operation. We think there were others in the war and that we should give some recognition of that."

Well, with that remark he got me involved in the damndest bunch of seminars you ever seen!

(Laughter)

KT: And I swore this would never happen again. Well, you see it has!

(Laughter)

KT: And unlike my, our commander in Anchorage, his name is Tom McInerny, he conned me into making a speech to his dining-in night by offering me a ride in an F-15 and there's no fighter pilot could turn that down. Martinez didn't do that well.

(Laughter)

KT: He furnished me with a guide or two here that took me out to the memorial and I was so very impressed with the comments and the points made that reflected on the

historical lessons that we can learn here in the activity that you people are participating in, it's more than a memorial, it's a national event that unified a nation. Lots of people really don't realize that people my age have probably forgotten it. Who knows if the much younger probably haven't given it any thought and I want to commend you people for making a good start. This is so much better than it was a few years ago, I can barely tell you.

Well, enough of that. I don't know whether you would like for me to lay a background of how I got into the fighter business or not, but I can give you some of that.

DM: Go right ahead. And if you feel more comfortable standing, stand. If you want to sit, sit.

KT: I'll stand as long as I can.

DM: There you go!

(Laughter)

KT: You could imagine that, in 1940—maybe you can't imagine, most of you are too young. That the sort of thing that would appeal to a young man growing up in Oklahoma, as I did, would be the idea of being a pursuit pilot. We weren't fighter pilots in those days, we were pursuit pilots. And the challenge of going to the flying school, which had a reputation of not only the danger but the limited number of graduates that usually succeed in going through the thing.

Well, this was just more than people in my category could take and so I started out in flying school, trying to see if I was adaptive to this sort of thing. And the more further I went, the more I liked it. And this is typical, but as you say, the eyes have something to it. You have to have damn good eyes or you'll get shot down. But you have to have a motivation to be a pursuit pilot, fighter pilot. And this guy



was very lucky, I got everything that I wanted. I was assigned to fighters, or pursuit. I was assigned to Hawaii. And I don't know what I would've done if I had to go to bombers, but I would've liked it.

I came to Hawaii, I was very fortunate. My first squadron commander was a guy by the name of Gordon Austin. He was one of those leaders, sat me down right quickly and said, "Say, you really enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ maybe a lot of fun, do you?" He says, "It's damn serious. We are going to be in a war and there's no uncertainty in it. If you're going to be a fighter pilot or a pursuit pilot, you're going to have to get with it and if you can't hack it, you go to bombers," and that was enough, away we went.

I have classmates that shot down opening day in the Philippines that had never fired their gun at anything other than a gun, an oil slick in the water. That's why they were shot down. Saburo Sakai, remember?

That wasn't my case because Austin saw to it that I burned up a lot of the government's ammunition. Shot at tow targets and I enjoyed every bit of it. There wasn't a day that went by that we didn't have to fight one another, working your way up the totem pole to see who was the top gun, I think they call it now. The top dog in those days too.

So we fought one another and wore out a lot of airplanes and this paid off for me. And this is why the activities of being awakened, seeing a bunch of enemy aircraft out there, didn't really give me a great big scare. I wasn't, I don't consider anything that I did heroic. This was what I was being trained to do. And I was helped along quite a bit for the simple reason that I didn't have too high a regard for the Japanese products and I didn't have too high a regard for their ability. And I had a hell of a high regard for my own. Too high, as I found out later. I had it. And this just added to one lucky break to another.

My squadron was, in spite of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, was out at Haleiwa on a routine gunnery practice, did bivouacking and all that. I wasn't sent out there just for disciplinary reasons although I would have to admit I had been sent a few times.

(Laughter)

KT: This was a lucky break so I was able to call, get my airplane off while the rest of 'em were unable to do so. And I think most of you probably, the rest of the day was just one big scramble after another. Historians see one part of it and I saw a small part. To see how much you have here at Pearl Harbor is something that, every time I see it, I think, well, I think it looks just like that when we were flying over, fifty-two years ago. And my first engagement, of course, was out here at the marine airfield at Ewa. And George and I broke up a pretty good party going on there. I guess they had no idea we were up and managed to shoot down several of 'em.

Our first encounter was with our own B-17s on the way to Ewa. And that was a—that could've led to also World War II's first court marshal.

(Laughter)

KT: Because they were camouflaged and they had different tails than the ones that were here. And they sure looked different. It was obvious those faces in the windows were people trying to tell me, "Don't shoot!"

(Laughter)

KT: And we didn't. In any event, you may have some questions of personal things or...

?: Yeah, Ken, I got a question. I've read about World War II and I remember you open a *National Geographic* or *Collier's*

or *Saturday Evening Post*, for the advertising by Curtiss what a great plane the P-40 was. How did you feel about the P-40, rated against the Japanese planes of that period?

KT: Well, let me tell you. I was invited to the—

\_\_\_\_\_ was the president of the \_\_\_\_\_ in Buffalo, New York and he invited a bunch of P-40 pilots, like myself. There for the, was it fifteen-thousandth P-40? And he had us there to explain to us that he had a lot better airplanes on the drawing board. And he knew the P-51 was a better airplane in those days, but Arnold had asked him, says, “You’re the only one that can hold the fort here while we get geared up.” He says, “You keep pumping out that P-40,” which he did.

As far as I’m concerned, I’ll give you the same answer that I gave Saburo Sakai, when he looked at his Zero, I says, “I could take you any day in the week, Saburo.”

Simply because we had the armor, fifty-calibers were a lot better than their 7.6. We had self-sealing tanks. We were faster. We couldn't turn with 'em but we could sure as hell knock 'em down if we could get 'em head on. And that's what we did.

Incidentally, that leads to an interesting observation, this head-on business. Up until that day, as a matter of fact, everybody flew in a three-ship formation, awkward as heck. Just fly around here with two wingmen sticking their wing in there and that just didn't seem right. And George and I split up, like this. And 'til that, that started something that we carried on down into Guadalcanal, because if you get somebody coming in on, golly, you're dead, but just turn and take 'em head on. And that became our tactic through Guadalcanal and all next time. And to summarize, I thought the P-40 was a damn good airplane. I liked it. As a matter of fact, if it keeps improving this place down here, it'll probably have one out at the *Arizona* Memorial!

(Laughter)

?: You said you couldn't \_\_\_\_\_ B-17s over Ewa. You could see the expressions on their face. Is that how you communicated, back then, with just...?

KT: Well, we weren't talking very many people, just ourselves here, George and I, coming down the line there and we were discussing these odd airplanes. They sure looked like B-17s but then they didn't. And as a matter of fact, I think that's the words we used! Say, we better get up there a little closer and look. This is, by the way, they were between here and Wheeler Field, which was where our B-17s was. We got up close enough to where I could tell they weren't Japanese \_\_\_\_\_. Nobody took a shot at 'em, thank god. They had enough trouble, as you know.

?: I had a question. Before the attack, did you get a lot of general intelligence on the capability of the Japanese or was it you just found out as you went?

KT: Very little. I knew very little about the Japanese, the Japanese airplanes. As I told you, we just had a general feeling that they put out inferior products and we thought we were a little better, operating the ones we had then. I couldn't have told you, couldn't identify the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Zeroes and the things like that. I got to where I could do it damn quickly after the December the 7<sup>th</sup>, but this was part of our training that isn't anywhere near what it is today or was later.

DM: Ken, one of the most dramatic scenes of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* is this sprawling air battle that takes place over Oahu. Just to set the record straight, did you engage any fighters at that time? If not, what did you engage?



KT: Well, the first group that I ran into was all about down here...

DM: Dive-bombers.

KT: ...leading up Ewa. And they were no match, you know. They just go down in a big ball of flames, most of 'em would. Sometimes I ran out of ammunition, as you know, chasing one of 'em out to sea and I'm sure he went down but and I'm sure his rear gunner was through.

But my most exciting part of the morning was at Wheeler Field. I had run out of ammunition chasing this guy over Ewa and decided the nearest ammunition was Wheeler. I knew the hangar had a bunch ready to go to, I think it was Midway. And so back there I found that my compatriots had the same idea. And we were sitting there on the end of the field, the armers came out, beginning to, they had already serviced George's airplane. And we were both not only

getting ammunition, we were getting a hell of a lot of advice from the brass!

(Laughter)

KT: And, oh boy, were we!

DM: What kind of advice?

KT: Like, "What are you doing with that airplane?" You know, that type of thing.

(Laughter)

KT: "Why haven't you dispersed it?"

And it's silly, very silly. Anyway, that all stopped with a big hurry when we all looked up and saw this wave of fighters coming up the swamp. And Welch was already re-armed

and so he was in the air. And they were just about finished with me and I not only lost my advisors—they got the hell out of there in a hurry—and I lost my armers. They had decided that they better go too. And they left a little ammunition dolly in front of my airplane. And by that time, it was just too late for me to do anything, you know. I could've probably retired from the field and then shot in the back, but I simply gave the old P-40 the throttle and this is why, another reason that endeared my heart. It jumped over that dolly like it wasn't even there and I held it on the ground as long as I could and headed right exactly toward—no runway in those days, just a grass field, and they just \_\_\_\_\_. And then suddenly it dawned on me, well, hell, they can't get a lead on me without flying right into the ground, you know. Have to do that and I can shoot it down and I don't even have my wheels off the ground, which I started to do. And this was beginning to be a lot of fun for me, as a matter of fact. I came back around, \_\_\_\_\_ shot down, I ended up right on one's tail. So nothing to it. And of

course, what I didn't know was I wasn't on the end of the line, I was in the middle of it.

(Laughter)

KT: And then one of 'em started taking pot shots at me, obviously and get up to some shots through the canopy right by my head, through my arm. And splattered \_\_\_\_\_ on the trim tie. The old P-40 had the trim tie up here. It didn't hurt me a bit, but I'll tell you, it woke me up! I was, scared the hell out of me! \_\_\_\_\_.

George knocked that guy off my tail and I simply continued with the one that was in front. You have to have a lot of luck to be a pursuit pilot.

DM: Did you shoot him down or did...

KT: Well, that was one of those that I had a little trouble getting claim 'cause I rushed him all the way down the island, the second.

DM: Which way did you fly?

KT: Oh, he was headed toward North Shore. And the whole bunch apparently coming right up the...

DM: The Oahu valley?

KT: Yeah. Well, that was, I think about the end of the day for most of us. We raced around the airfield and tried to put together what was left of an Air Force, Army Air Corps. There wasn't much. We had nine P-40s, I think, down at, out at Haleiwa and, of course, these were P-40s that survived. And then there were a few, maybe another at Wheeler, damn few though, and Bellows.

DM: Did you go out looking for the Japanese after you got

\_\_\_\_\_?

KT: Yes, that's, yes, we did, as a matter of fact. George and I jumped in my car again and started back down the road from Haleiwa, looking for this airplane we knew had gone down out there in the pineapple field just north of Schofield. And first thing we ran into was my commanding officer, which was Gordon Austin. He had been over the Big Island when the war started. He had been goofing off and hunting. He saw the two of us out there on the highway and he said, "I should've known it. You damn guys are goofing off again! Get back, get to work! Don't you know there's a war on?" And really upset.

(Laughter)

KT: And I said, "Well, sir, your squadron didn't do too damn badly while you were gone. Would you like to go out and see some of it?"

He said, "What?"

"We've got a bunch of 'em scattered around here on the island. There's one right over there," so from that day on, George and I could do no wrong!

(Laughter)

KT: Anyway, that was, we did go up there and look at the airplane. Picked up a souvenir or two.

DM: Do you still have it?

KT: No, I put all that in a nice trunk when I boarded the carrier with these P-40s for Guadalcanal and it never showed up. I don't know what happened. But we did have some.

DM: You know, one story you told me I think that people will really enjoy, could you tell about the time that you almost got killed in the remaking of, at Pearl Harbor?

KT: Oh. Yes, my wife and I came with our granddaughter and they had all these—those of you have seen this \_\_\_\_\_ probably saw this airplane taking off. It was shot and veered into the line of airplanes.

DM: This was the movie, *Tora!Tora!Tora!*

KT: Well, what happened on that, we were down there with the director and all the cameramen and everything and they were filming this scene. And we're standing right on the airfield there and the wind changed just a little bit and this



guy, you know, was an automatic pilot type of operation that they had and the wind took him into the airplanes and that was completely unplanned. There wasn't anything at all supposed to be like that. They left it in the print but I could just see these things, the wheels flying off—I'm sure that you can in the movie—coming up the line there and I thought that was more dangerous than Pearl Harbor!

(Laughter)

KT: \_\_\_\_\_ get off the movie set and go \_\_\_\_\_.

But that was it.

??: Did you stay in the Pacific theater throughout the war?

KT: Yes. Not, I was sent home finally from Guadalcanal, but I took a flight of people originally here on a little carrier, *Nassau*. And they dumped us all down there around Espiritu Santos islands. That was one of the first P-40 flights off of a

carrier. Few details, that carrier was 410 feet long. I don't remember very many things, including my name if I don't get a letter every day, but I remember that because I was the first one off!

(Laughter)

KT: And I just, seeing me like that, that's just not long enough to get this thing off there. The carrier could go fifteen knots and we had to wait until we had at least fifteen knots of wind. Everybody held their brakes on and put flaps down and then, just to the end of that carrier, I was still debating how in the hell we were going to do this. And it just worked beautifully. No problem at all. And at the Nimitz Museum, somebody asked me the same question and I said, "You've never heard of this ship that was called the *Nassau*?"

And the guy went out to, brought back a *Nassau* cap. He says, "Yes, I remember. \_\_\_\_\_ on. Would you like a picture of your P-40?" and he handed it to me.

DM: Wow. Okay, one of the things that's eclipsed in history is not only your compatriot in combat, but a good friend of yours, George Welch. Can you tell us a little bit about him and how he lost his life?

KT: Well, yes. We took turns about, you know, George and I were assigned various different things, appearing on TV—not TV, they didn't have—radio programs, *We the People*, and all that. And North American needed a test pilot. So George was well on his way as one of the leading aces down in New Guinea. And they got him out of the service to go become the test pilot for North American. And he was the chief test pilot for the F-86 and he had been doing this now for several years when his boss, as a matter of fact, Lee Atwood, gave me a call one day. He says, "I want you to try

to fly," it was in Washington, "fly out here and try to get George to give it up for a while now and ride the desk. He's done his share and it's about time to quit."

DM: What year was this?

KT: \_\_\_\_\_.

DM: Fifty-nine?

KT: It was first in Washington. Fifty? Fifty-eight?

?T: No, it had to be before then because we were in England in '51.

KT: Yeah.

?T: Germany in '52 and '[5]3. So it had to be either before or after.

KT: It was fifty-five!

DM: I remember, he was...

KT: Fifty-five!

DM: ...F-100, is that...

KT: Fifty-five, he was testing the F-100 so I got in a B-25 and went all the way out to see what I could do, persuade him to, enough is enough. And I got a call, by the way, from this squadron commander, Gordon Austin, General Austin, saying that I talked it over with him. He says, "There's no use you proceeding because he was killed today."

And what happened was he \_\_\_\_\_ were having trouble with the terminal dive characteristics of the [F-]100. And it just came apart on him, completely. And he got out of it,

managed to get out of the thing, but he was going so damn fast that he had injuries and crushed chest and that was how he was killed.

DM: What kind of guy was he?

KT: Hmm?

DM: What kind of a man was he?

KT: He was a small guy, a bit husky type, but he had that feel for an airplane. And he could fly, no question about it. And we just had so many enjoyable conversations together and flights together and I'll tell you one of our agreements, if you'd like. We discussed, "Say, which one of us do you think got the first airplane in World War II?"

"I haven't any idea, George, but I'll tell you one damn thing, it's one of the two of us because nobody else was about!"

We couldn't decide. So he says, "Well, let's leave it this way. Let's let the survivor claim it."

I've never claimed it. One of the two of us had that airplane

DM: \_\_\_\_\_ pictures of you at war.

KT: Mm-hmm.

DM: Can you take that picture that is on your right? I believe you were getting your medal there. Explain the medal ceremony and how that all came about, the medal you won?

KT: I couldn't imagine that. I've always got a big kick out of that. Helmets, pistols.

(Laughter)

KT: Gas masks. I'd never had one on before!

(Laughter)

KT: Never! Never. That was the first time I'd ever had a helmet on, a gas mask or a pistol. And they lined us up to give us the DFC, which is, that was about the best the army did. The navy did a little bit better but George and I got medals one and two of World War II. I guess this is the highest award that, for combat only, Medal of Honor is the highest, of course, that can be ordered for other than combat duty.

DM: I'd just like to...

(Tape interference)

DM: What was the ceremony like and where was, do you remember where it took place?



KT: Oh yeah, very formal. You know, the adjutant greeting, all that, the citations and all that sort of stuff. You don't see the troops there. Oh, you see a few of them back here, they had all this sort of stuff and it hasn't changed a bit. It's exactly the way you give out medals today and they have been doing it, I guess, since Persian.

DM: Was that at Wheeler Field?

KT: It was on the ramp at Wheeler Field. And I might tell you a little personal aside, the general giving out the medals, and there, as he came by, he says, "You know, it's damned good to find somebody that's getting applauded for this operation out here!"

(Laughter)

DM: Do you still have your medals?

KT: Yes.

?: Do you still wear 'em?

KT: Hmm?

?: Do you still wear them, \_\_\_\_\_, like they did in  
*Medal of Honor*, are you allowed to wear it for one day that  
you won it?

KT: I guess I can wear it any time I want to!

(Laughter)

?: Never mind!

(Laughter)

KT: No, I don't wear it. I've got it on a board in my den.

?: Did you keep track of how many planes you shot down during the whole war?

KT: Six.

?: Shot down six of 'em.

?: What was your, I guess, the scariest encounter or greatest opponent? Were they pretty much all dive-bombers and torpedo planes?

KT: I think probably the thing that bothered me as much as anything was being shelled by battleships at Guadalcanal. When they move up there with those, you know, bombs are one thing. They came through the coconut trees, hit the ground and exploded. Not so with those damn guns. They come whistling in at this low angle, tearing off the trees and blowing up things. And one of the most magnificent sights

of the war that I saw was when we flew out escorting some bombers to see tremendous line of Japanese ships, one right after another, coming down the slot from Bougainville to Guadalcanal. And I have to take my hat off to the navy bombers that we were escorting because you never seen so damn much anti-aircraft in your life that they was throwing up. And of course we didn't have to go down through that, we were on the fringe of it, up above it. We went home and started digging our little foxholes a little bit deeper because we knew darn well that there were a lot of 'em left. There were several sunk on this particular mission that I was on, but I figured we were in for it tonight. And as it turned out, this was the fleet that came down to evacuate the troops in something like October, I think it was, or November. They had already decided they had lost that theater.

DM: I think we've heard that your group is the Cactus Air Force, is that correct?

KT: Yeah.

DM: There's a recent book that published (inaudible).

?: Ken, going back to December 7, '41, did you have any problems with friendly fire that day, landing and taking off again?

KT: No. Not at all. Our little airfield out at Haleiwa wasn't touched, you see.

?: How about when you came into Wheeler?

KT: I came to Wheeler that one time to get some ammunition and then I hustled back to—see, we had our tents out there and everything, and so...

?: The reason ask is 'cause Jim Taylor, who came in on the Wildcats that night on Ford Island, got hit, but those were shot down.

KT: I thought almost all of 'em were.

DM: All but one.

KT: All but one.

DM: Skip \_\_\_\_\_.

KT: No, I made it a point to stay away from Pearl Harbor!

(Chuckling)

KT: I could see what was going on here. We had one \_\_\_\_\_ that lost a P-40 for us because he was flying around. There was, you know, nobody, no enemies on the ground at the

time and they started shooting at him here over Pearl Harbor and he thought, well, I'll go down and let 'em see that it's friendly. The lower he got, the more they shot! I went out to count the holes in that airplane and there were something like 400. He got it back to Wheeler Field, but it wasn't in very good shape \_\_\_\_\_ come back.

DM: Ken, when you were flying down here, engaging the enemy over Ewa, you could obviously see Pearl Harbor. Do you remember that? Can you kind of describe to me what it must have been like? What altitude were you flying?

KT: Well, we came down the island maybe at two or three thousand feet. And I could see there were no airplanes. First, we checked Wheeler. Nothing there. Then we came on and ran into the B-17s and secondly I looked over here and no airplanes here. Everything was burning. Just looked like that whole harbor was on fire, as you know. And then we could see the marine field here and that's when we saw,

oh, probably it must have been a dozen at least, maybe more, aircraft there and they had obviously finished their bombing and were strafing and we just simply got into that line and went right up it. But wasn't a hell of a lot of air combat there but that worked.

?: Did both of you get to \_\_\_\_\_ at Ewa?

KT: Oh yeah. Yeah. The confusion in my case was that two of my kills were offshore. I claimed 'em and we didn't have gun cameras. And would you believe, they sent the inspector general of the army out to confirm the airplanes. His way of confirming 'em was marching up the pineapple fields and, "Yup, that's an airplane!"

(Laughter)

KT: And he had a little problem when they're out in the water. And I'm sure, well, like most people would agree, I wasn't



waiting around to see them actually hit the water. When they started smoking and I ran out of ammunition, I turned and headed for Wheeler Field. They credited me initially with two and two probables, later four.

?: Do you remember how far out over the water you were?  
Was it just a mile or just...?

KT: One of 'em was \_\_\_\_\_. And another one I chased a hell of a long ways out there until I ran out of ammunition.

DM: I think that when the last visit you had, I showed you the piece of wreckage that...

KT: Came ashore.

DM: ...unfortunately, inspector general had to wait fifty years to see...

KT: I think he's gone by now.

DM: But that is definitely from the bow \_\_\_\_\_.

And of course, our friend in Texas has confirmed that it was probably \_\_\_\_\_.

KT: Well, there didn't seem to be any questions when you found out how many of 'em they lost. Lots of planes, I'm sure, were \_\_\_\_\_ didn't get back to the carrier, for whatever reason. They may have killed themselves landing.

?: Did you see there were nine P-40s in Haleiwa?

KT: There was.

?: How many of them got off the ground?

KT: Just the two of us to start with and then there was one more later on. And then they gathered up a flight after everybody

had gone. And that was when [2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John I.] Dains was killed flying over Schofield. Everybody was shooting at everybody. It's just pretty hard to visualize how jumpy people were around here and all sorts of rumors like that. Can you imagine a beautiful place like this and three hotels in town—the Moana, the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel], and the Halekulani? And still an awful lot of Orientals here and people were nervous, very nervous. Had all sorts of rumors that, you know, they were coming ashore and making landings out here, \_\_\_\_\_. And we finally, at Haleiwa, we had problems with our own guard, when they'd scramble us at night, they'd run our airplanes, they were in danger of being shot at. We worked up all sorts of silly arrangements like tying white bandanas around your head and arm and try to keep somebody from shooting, 'cause there wasn't an enemy in hundreds of miles, but it was a pretty exciting time.

?: Yeah, there's a lot of colorful stories on how you got to Haleiwa. At an all-night poker game, driving through the cane fields. How much of that is \_\_\_\_\_?

KT: Well, I wasn't, I visited the poker game and...

(Laughter)

KT: But I really was down in Honolulu, Hickam Field. And then it's not so strange when you think of the tuxedo, because most people don't realize, Saturday night in those days, if you wanted to eat in the officers' mess, you put on a tuxedo. And so, we put on a tuxedo. And most people, most men will agree with me, when you're awakened suddenly, for any reason, the first thing you do is jump up and put your pants on. And the first pants I came to happened to be my tuxedo pants! And they messed 'em up, I can tell you that.

(Laughter)

KT: But there is a funny thing about that, going to Haleiwa. I don't know how many of you have been to the officers' club at Wheeler Field. It wasn't a target but they were coming right over it at the time and in the, my car was parked right on the road there, and the only telephones was right here in this corridor, corridor \_\_\_\_\_ mess hall was back here.

So I went out to call on this only telephone in Haleiwa to say, you know, here we come, load 'em up. And we were watching \_\_\_\_\_ no higher than that ceiling coming over my car! Strafing. And they were really strafing the airfield, but a few of the shots were coming into the club. And George and I stood there for a while and he says, "How in the hell do you think we're going to get to that car of yours without getting shot?"

He says, "No problem at all. Let's wait until we can hear the shells, 'cause then they're already past us, you know."

"Good thinking, George."

So we ran out, got in my car, wailed on it and I was a mile or two down the road \_\_\_\_\_, "George, that was the airplane there. What about the next airplane right behind? We hadn't heard anything!"

He says, "Well, it worked, didn't it?"

(Laughter)

DM: What kind of car was it? And I understand the story is that, can you confirm this, you guys did set a land speed record getting out?

KT: Well, I got up there in about ten minutes and it was a Buick.  
Now when you passed your forty-hour check, you had to buy  
a car.

DM: What was that, '40?

KT: Nineteen-forty. It was the only car that I ever bought. And I  
got more money out of it even after I wrecked it, 'cause then  
I quit at it because there were no cars coming into Hawaii.

?: Was it like a highway or a dirt road, or what?

KT: It was a highway. I don't think it's a hell of a lot improved  
today.

(Laughter)

KT: We did have some conversation, George and I, going up  
there, but both of us had had some very distasteful problems

with the local police, traffic around town. Here I was  
buzzing along at, boy, close to 100 miles an hour, (inaudible)  
what'll happen if he pulls up side us today?

"You're gonna have to shoot him, George."

(Laughter)

DM: Came through at Haleiwa Bridge, still there.

KT: It was just like it is today. I haven't been up there this year.

DM: On the fiftieth...

KT: Keep in that field too had no runway on it. Just a small field.

DM: Ken, one question that we get here a lot at the park is how  
do you feel about the Japanese? You've had an opportunity  
to meet with several of the pilots, what's your feeling now



about them and meeting with them and going to the  
symposium \_\_\_\_\_?

KT: Well, I think the people I've met and the people who did the fighting and I think we're all, particularly the historians involved here realize that they old men make wars, the young men fight 'em. And these were young men, Abe and all the rest of 'em, and they had nothing to do with this war. I hold no animosity whatsoever to 'em, Saburo Sakai, or Abe, or any of the rest of 'em for that matter. But nations have a way of acting in their own interests. They did it then and it's my belief, given the right circumstances, the nation will do it again. I think a great lesson of particularly the international community and as it's growing up now in commerce, is that we've just got to find a better way to solve our diplomatic stalemates than war and until we do, we better keep a little force going than we have. The Japanese were lulled into thinking that that attack would do something for it. It was the biggest, stupidest mistake that they could ever make.

There was no other event that could have ever gotten this nation speaking with one voice as that did, motivated. And that did.

Most of you are too young to realize that there were a lot of differences of opinion in those days. A lot of people didn't think we should go to war against Germany and should not be helping Britain. And certainly we were twisting Japan's tail in those days, with the embargo and whatnot. By god, they had taken over most of China and they had been fighting since '37 and we were bound and determined to, apparently, split up the colonial—was it greater Southeast Asia?

(Inaudible)

KT: \_\_\_\_\_. No, I don't blame any of that on military people but I think our leaders acted then in their

own self-interest and they probably will do so again, ours and theirs.

DM: How did you meet Mrs. Taylor?

KT: Well, I met her because she was visiting with our squadron—not squadron, but another pilot up here, in Oklahoma, and \_\_\_\_\_. He happened to be one of these fighter pilots that never quite wanted to be a fighter pilot. And he, I happened to be flying at the P-40 one day and I saw him trying to do a formation and ran into another airplane. He bailed out, \_\_\_\_\_ landed in that nice parachute that you brought in, you know. Sid bailed out and I watched him do all this. He had a hell of a time getting out of the airplane. And he landed in the pineapple field north of Schofield. And I flew down to see if I could be of any help. Sid was laying there in the pineapple patch and wasn't moving. And I scared about every helpful person away

within miles around, you know, by trying to get their attention! All I managed to do was run 'em away.

So I flew back to Wheeler and got in my car and ran out there and took some other people, of course. And here was Sid, what had happened was that he hadn't buckled up his straps on the thing, you know, how they come down and the parachute came up and hit him in the chin and broke his neck. So here was Sid, laying there. He says, "I heard you coming \_\_\_\_\_ like that." He says, "I just couldn't raise my head up off this thing to say everything was all right."

Well, Sid survived, he got well and went back to Oklahoma, but he didn't take his girlfriend with him. I took her.

(Laughter)

DM: Mrs. Taylor, is that how the story goes?

?T: Sort of.

(Laughter)

?T: No comment.

(Laughter)

KT: We were married at the Church of the Crossroads.

?T: Which is now under the freeway.

KT: And honeymooned at the Halekulani. We have long dear ties with Hawaii.

??: So you were here on December 7 as well? Where were you at that time?

?T: I was asleep, like he was. We, everybody partied in those days, you know. Young and gay. \_\_\_\_\_.  
Anyway, my father had navy housing. He was a civilian working for the navy and he woke me up to say, "Come on out, there's a sham battle going on," that's what they called 'em in those days.

And it would be fun to go and see it. So we drove out the part of the gate at Pearl Harbor, there was a little bank there and then a gate. And these planes were coming over and people were yelling, "You fool! Get out of the street! Can't you see we're being attacked by the Japanese?"

We didn't know. So we got out of there.

\_\_\_\_\_ and as he said, everything was gloom and doom. They were poisoning the water supply. They were poisoning the milk supply. They were attacking the North Shore. They were here, there and everywhere. And people were terrified. We were supposed to head for the

cane fields. Well, if you've lived here, you know what the cane fields are. They're impenetrable!

(Laughter)

?T: They'd burn it off to get rid of the undergrowth. Yet women and children were supposed to take what they could gather and head for the cane fields. But we didn't, we all just hid out in the dark at night and one thing and another, you know, that was it.

?: When did you know he was all right?

?T: I didn't really know or care at the time.

(Laughter)

?T: I'd met him but I thought he was a smart aleck.

(Laughter)

?T: I changed.

(Inaudible)

?T: Typical fighter pilot.

??: I have a question. I'm a mechanic in the navy and I've been working on aircraft for about thirteen years. And I know that every airplane has its glitch and especially if you're assigned your own particular airplane. And you get used to the problems of the airplane, you know. It may have a slow gear that comes up on one side or anything. Was there anything, did you fly an aircraft that was always assigned to you?

KT: No. We didn't have enough of 'em. There were almost a third of the air power was here in Hawaii. We had two



groups, four squadrons each and they were authorized maybe five airplanes each. So we had all sorts of airplanes, B-26s, B-36s, we had B-10s, which we used to tow. And this is in my squadron. And then I think we had gotten up to about nine P-40s so we weren't assigned individual airplanes that you could get. I was later. Yes, I got very familiar with my airplane.

?: The aircraft that you flew that day, do you remember anything particular about it? I know a lot of pilots, sometimes they think back to an airplane they flew three or four years ago and say, "Oh yeah, you know, that airplane, on that day, it gave me a lot of problems doing this," you know. Do you remember anything particular or was it just...?

KT: I couldn't even remember the number. And in those days, for some reason, and now this isn't the case, they didn't put the number, they just put the type of airplane, which was a

P-40B in your log book. And no, I can't remember any of the idiosyncrasies of that airplane, but I certainly agree with what you're saying. When you fly one frequently, you get to knowing, like you say, this airplane, it's always leaking oil.

?: Yeah.

KT: Or something like that.

?: It always does that, don't worry about that. That kind of thing.

(Chuckling)

DM: Well, we have, the hour has gone by like that and we're going to wrap this up. Some people have gone out and purchased prints that they'd like to have personalized. I know how much you like to do that. So these are, you know, government workers, so there's very few fringes we get, but

one of 'em is maybe having you personalize that. But we'd like to wrap it up. Is there anybody that has a question that they'd like to ask that you've been kind of silent here?

??: I just have one question, it has nothing to do with December 7, \_\_\_\_\_?

KT: No, I didn't, but George did. And thought she was one hell of a gal. She was, the reason he did is of course she spent a lot of time down at the dry lake, where they were doing all these tests. And no, I didn't have the great pleasure of meeting her. I know a lot of my friends that did and they had a very high regard of her.

DM: Bob Kinsler, did you see any of this P-40 activity at all?

Bob Kinsler (BK): I saw one plane that day. It was about five seconds, no, about five minutes after it possibly dropped a bomb on Wheeler. I was at Schofield in 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry

Quadrangle. It woke us all up. We thought perhaps one of the gas-fired mess hall stoves or ranges had blown up, but when we got out on the lanai, there was no indication that they were going toward one area. In fact, we saw this plane go by, we had no aircraft identification instruction. It could've been a navy or marine plane. So we went down to breakfast. It was \_\_\_\_\_ because it had its landing gear, two men in the cockpit, the canopy was back, he was about as far from us as the wall there.

I was on the second floor, just clearing the third story of the three-story building. I was on the second story, went down to breakfast. Never ate breakfast that day. Like Mrs. Taylor said, the rumors were coming in.

I was a radio operator. We had to go to the football stadium at Roosevelt High School. That was our battle station. And we set up telegraph sets with our outlying battalions and we were getting reports just like you said, paratroopers up in

the North Shore, invasion fleet sighted off the Waianae coast. But it was scary that night because that football stadium had absolutely no lights at all. We'd come in off, we were assigned guard duty...

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

BK: ...the navy bought the farm out here. We had a way of, once in a while we'd go down and beat them up, you know. Throw sacks of, oh, manure or something...

(Laughter)

KT: ...out of the window and I thought, that's what it was. That was my first reaction when I see this \_\_\_\_\_, just like you. That's no navy airplane.

?: Was Gabby GA-BRES-KEE in your squadron?

KT: Yeah, you want me to tell you a story about Gabby?

?: Yeah.

KT: Think I should?

?T: Yeah.

(Laughter)

KT: Gabby was a wild \_\_\_\_\_. And he wasn't in my squadron in '47 to start but I shifted squadrons and Gabby was in there. And you can imagine that somebody had shot down a few airplanes was the target of every pursuit pilot in Wheeler Field. They were going to fight us, every one of them wanted to see if they could beat our butt. And I don't

know how many times I fought old Gabby. And I was, he was getting, I was beating him but he was getting just a bit better every time.

And so we had a squadron \_\_\_\_\_ and the squadron was out at Dillingham, that nice, long runway. And Gabby and I were going in and I kept bending the throttle. And I blew the damn thing up, just exploded, this P-40. And so Gabby pulled around on my tail, it was on fire, smoking. He says, "Gotcha."

And I radioed him and told him that, yes, this is serious, Gabby! I'm out of airplane here. And I rolled the canopy back and started to jump out. I took a look at that water and all those sharks that I'd seen while I was flying around, I thought, well hell, I don't think I want to do that.

(Laughter)

KT: And I climbed back in and got down the cockpit. It just didn't occur to me to shut that canopy. I left the damn thing open and that, just like sitting in a chimney. Gabby was no help. He was right on my tail and we had had some very bad disasters out there, forced landings, and so I said to myself, well, I think I'll make it back to that field. It's 10,000 feet long, the longest one on the island. I'll aim right for the center, so I did. I aimed for the center. Came around, Gabby's still on my tail. He wasn't going to be one damn bit of help. And I got over that field by just about like that, just squeaked right on the end. I never did tell anybody that I was just almost a mile short of landing if I hadn't of head for the center of it, I would've been just one 5,000 feet down in the gully. But it looked pretty good, you know. The guys came out and \_\_\_\_\_ that they have an airplane burning and they put the fire out. You don't really happen \_\_\_\_\_ to know what you're doing.

(Laughter)



KT: Fighter pilots take advantage of all this stuff!

DM: Well, I'd like to thank you and it's always a treat for our staff to have somebody of your stature here and unfortunately, people in your stature are a dwindling resource, as we say.

KT: Yeah, we're running out of us.

DM: Running out. But it's really been great. I hope the staff enjoyed it. What we'll do is those of you who have prints, we'll set 'em up right over here and Hannah wants to be the first. She has to go, so she's got her print. So she asked if she could be the first. And thank you very much, please stay around and we really appreciate it.

(Applause)

END OF INTERVIEW